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Legislative Republicans Want to Fix Broken Board of State Canvassers

Bills allow Bureau of Elections' decisions to stand unless reversed by Canvassers

Lansing - Senate Majority Leader Ken Sikkema today announced that Senate and House Republicans are introducing legislation to fix what many consider a broken Board of State Canvassers.

"In the past few months, we have seen the Board of State Canvassers prove how easily it can damage the credibility of the electoral process because of political manipulation," said Sikkema, R-Wyoming.

Last December, the Democrats on the board defied a Court of Appeals order charging the board to place the Michigan Civil Rights Initiative proposal on the 2006 ballot. Recently, a Democratic member of the board resigned after pleading guilty to contempt of court charges. A second Democratic member resigned to avoid contempt charges.

"My bills will take the politics out of this process," said Sen. Alan Cropsey, R-DeWitt. "The nonpartisan bureau is the expert body capable of making the necessary decisions regarding ballot initiatives, so let's let them do their job. Renegade members of the board should no longer be allowed to flout the Constitution and ignore voters' rights in the name of partisan politics."

Cropsey and Sikkema are co-sponsoring the legislation being introduced today. Senate Bills 1350-1352 would still require all decisions to be made in a public meeting. However, the decisions made by the Bureau of State Elections will stand unless a majority of the Board of State Canvassers votes to reverse those decisions. Currently, the board must give an affirmative vote for the bureau's decisions to take effect.

"This system has been hobbling along for years, and the recent inexcusable actions of the two Democratic board members have now crippled it completely," Sikkema said. "It's time for the Legislature to step in and restore order to the ballot process and protect the voters' constitutional rights to petition government."

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